AMNDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-2 (canceled)

Claim 3 (Previously presented): Method of increasing the surface tension of at least one solid object, the method comprising the steps of:

providing at least a portion of an analytical test element that is formed to transport a sample liquid from a sample application site to a determination site, the test element including the at least one solid object having a surface,

depositing a layer of at least one element that can be oxidized with water or an alloy that can be oxidized with water on the surface of the solid object to form a deposited layer, and

subsequently applying boiling water or water vapour on the deposited layer, whereby the resulting deposited layer is solid and more hydrophilic than the surface of the solid object.

Claim 4 (Previously presented): Method of increasing the surface tension of at least one solid object, the method comprising the steps of:

providing at least a portion of an analytical test element that is formed to transport a sample liquid from a sample application site to a determination site, the test element including the at least one solid object having a surface,

depositing on the surface a layer of at least one element that can be oxidized with water or an alloy that can be oxidized with water and

subsequently applying superheated water vapour to the deposited layer, whereby the resulting deposited layer is solid and more hydrophilic than the surface of the solid object.

Claim 5 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 3, wherein the element is derived from at least one element selected from the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 6 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 5, wherein the element is derived from at least one element selected from the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, Zr.

Claim 7 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 6, wherein the element is Al.

Claim 8 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 3, wherein the alloy contains at least two components selected from the group of elements consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 9 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 3, wherein the alloy contains at least one component selected from a first group of elements consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb, which are alloyed with at least one element selected from a second group of elements consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 10 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 9, wherein the alloy contains at least one component selected from a first group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, Zr, which is alloyed with at least one element selected from a second group consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 11 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 10, wherein the alloy is composed of Al which is alloyed with at least one element selected from the group consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 12 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 3, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 13 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 3, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 14 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 13, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 10 nm and 100 nm.

Claim 15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 4, wherein the element is derived from the elements selected from the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 17 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 4, wherein the alloy contains at least two components selected from elements in the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 18 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 4, wherein the alloy contains at least one component selected from a first group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb, which are alloyed with at least one element selected from a second group consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 19 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 4, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 20 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 4, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 21 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 5, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 22 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 5, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 23 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 8, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 24 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 8, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 25 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 9, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 26 (Currently amended): ~~Use of a surface coating as claimed in~~ Method of claim 9, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claims 27-28 (canceled)